

SPORTS
Is the ACC-Big Ten Challenge really a challenge these days? 1B



NATION & WORLD
Trump scales back 2 national monuments in Utah 6A



FOUNDED 1894
VOLUME 153, No. 339

FACEBOOK.COM/NEWSANDOBSERVER
TWITTER.COM/NEWSOBSERVER

NEWS ALL DAY.
YOUR WAY.

TUESDAY DECEMBER 5 2017

\$1.50

 Possible storms
67°/47° See 12B

The News & Observer

NEWSOBSERVER.COM

STATE POLITICS

Judges weigh in: Election versus selection

BY ANNE BLYTHE
ablythe@newsobserver.com

RALEIGH
Judges are used to making decisions and announcing them to the court.

But on one of the most fundamental questions facing the North Carolina courts this year — whether the state should abandon the election of judges and move toward an appointment process to decide who sits on the bench — few of the state’s sitting judges have revealed their ultimate verdict.

That question hangs over the judiciary as lawmakers propose change after change to their branch of government — a branch that was designed to be independent from the legislative and executive offices whose laws and policies they can strike down if they run afoul of the state or federal Constitutions.

“Active judges can’t speak out and can’t complain,” recently retired Wake County Judge Donald Stephens said at a recent forum. “They can’t say the legislature is overreaching; they can’t call the legislature’s hand. Active judges are easy targets for a legislature intent on getting their attention, intent on influencing their decisions and intent on coercing their support.”

The North Carolina Association of District Court Judges has polled its 272 members on whether they favored a system in which judges were selected instead of elected and the results returned in mid-November show that 69 percent said they supported holding elections in North Carolina. But the organization has not yet issued an official statement, citing a lack of details on how a proposed amendment to the Constitution would be worded.

When asked whether lawmakers or the governor should play a role in the appointment process the judges expressed an even stronger view, said Joe Buckner, the chief district court judge for Orange and Chatham counties and a member of the association’s Board of Governors.

More than 96 percent of the judges were opposed to giving the lawmakers a role in appointing judges and 85 percent were against a system that would require legislative confirmation of the appointees, Buckner said, adding that the association has yet to take an official position

SEE JUDGES, 10A

Accused: Prison plant had 1 guard watch 33 inmates

BY GAVIN OFF
AND AMES ALEXANDER
goff@charlotteobserver.com
aalexander@charlotteobserver.com

An inmate at the center of October’s deadly escape attempt at Pasquotank Correctional Institution said the prison sewing plant where the plan unfolded was always staffed with just one officer.

A single correctional officer was overseeing 33 inmates when four of them tried to break out of the Eastern North Carolina prison. The inmates were armed with scissors and hammers, according to a 911 caller.

Four prison workers were fatally wounded.

“That’s how it always is, every (sic) since I got hired in the

sewing plant in March of this year,” wrote Wisezah Buckman, one of four inmates charged with first-degree murder in the assaults. “Sometimes other officers would come and fraternize with the sole sewing plant officer but there was always one officer.”

Buckman’s account corroborates what the Observer

learned about staffing inside Pasquotank’s sewing plant on the day of the fatal attacks. Better staffing might have prevented the assaults, experts say.

A previous Observer story revealed that staff shortages in North Carolina’s prisons have reached dangerous levels over the past two years, despite state efforts to attract more officers.

Buckman responded to an Observer letter asking about the attack and about staffing at Pasquotank that day. In his nine-page letter to the Observer, written from Polk Correctional Institution north of Durham,

Buckman admitted that he tried to escape but said, “I am innocent of the latest set of felonies that I have been charged with.”

Buckman wrote that he was sitting at a sewing machine on Oct. 12, joking with another inmate, shortly before an “invitation was extended towards me; which I pondered and considered and concluded that all I want to do is see my children and tell them I love them.”

Soon afterward, he said, “mass chaos” ensued.

“Innocent people were

SEE PRISON, 5A

‘They took him’: Triangle teens seek to halt fathers’ deportation



PHOTOS BY CASEY TOTH ctoth@heraldsun.com

The daughters, Stephanie Delgado-Garcia, left, and Yhairi Delgado-Garcia, of two brothers facing deportation speak at a protest at Rep. G.K. Butterfield’s office in Durham. Alerta Migratoria says the men fled Michoacán as teens because of their father’s political beliefs.

BY VIRGINIA BRIDGES
vbridges@heraldsun.com

DURHAM

Stephanie Delgado-Garcia’s mother picked her up from Hillside High School earlier last month and said her father wouldn’t be coming home.

“My mom was like ‘Your dad isn’t going to come home anymore, they took him,’ and she started crying, and then I started crying,” Stephanie, 15, said. “Then I was just in shock.”

Stephanie’s father, Jose Delgado Arroyo of Durham, and his brother, Dario Delgado Arroyo of Wake County, went to a check-in appointment with federal immigration officials in Charlotte Nov. 17, when they were both detained.

On Thursday the men’s daughters Stephanie and Yhairi



Annette Taylor, director of community engagement for Rep. G.K. Butterfield, talks with protesters at his office Nov. 30 about the potential deportation of brothers Jose and Dario Delgado Arroyo.

ri Delgado-Garcia, 14, sought to bring attention to their family’s situation. Stephanie organized an hours-long walk-out at Hillside High. Yhairi did the same at Garner High.

Then the teens, along with other family members and supporters, including advocacy group Alerta Migratoria, held a press conference outside U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield’s office

in Durham. An aide told them the congressman is doing the best he can.

The family and Alerta Migratoria contend the brothers had inadequate legal representation and should be allowed to stay in the United States to continue providing for their nine children, including four with medical issues.

The brothers have been through the full legal process, said Bryan Cox, a spokesman for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. They saw a federal immigration judge, were ordered removed and filed an appeal, which was denied, he said.

“They were taken into custody after the immigration courts denied their request for stay of removal,” Cox said. “So, at this point, there are no

SEE DEPORT, 5A

CUSTOMER SERVICE

To subscribe or report delivery issues,
800-522-4205 or newsobserver.com/customer-service

Business
Classified
Comics

7A
11B
8B

Lotteries
Obituaries
Opinion

2A
8A
11A

Sports
Triangle
Under the Dome

1B
3A
2A

7 28027 00100 7